

STATE OF WISCONSIN
DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

BUTLER'S GARTERSNAKE STAKEHOLDER NEWSLETTER

MAY 2008

UPDATES TO THE BUTLER'S GARTERSNAKE CONSERVATION STRATEGY

The Butler's Gartersnake Conservation Strategy was developed in 2005 by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) in partnership with Butler's gartersnake researchers and stakeholders. The goal of the Strategy is to secure the long-term protection of the Butler's gartersnake in Wisconsin. The Strategy is recognized as a "work in progress" that will be updated to incorporate new information and science related to the Butler's gartersnake.



The DNR is currently working on updating the Butler's Gartersnake Conservation Strategy, which will contain an updated regulatory framework and the addition of a pro-active plan. This newsletter describes the proposed Butler's gartersnake regulatory framework.



The primary objective of this Conservation Strategy revision is to address the three regulatory goals that resulted from the Butler's Gartersnake Population and Habitat Viability Assessment (PHVA) stakeholder workshop held in February 2007.

Population and Habitat Viability Assessment (PHVA) Regulatory Goals:

Goal 1: "Develop a regulatory framework with flexibility in design and certainty in process."

Actions Taken: The proposed regulatory framework that contains flexible regulatory options and a clearly identified regulatory process.

Goal 2: "Revise, simplify, and clarify regulations, science, and options to all stakeholders."

Actions Taken: In addition to a clearly identified regulatory process, the proposed regulatory framework contains more detailed definitions and a greater number of regulatory options for project applicants.

Goal 3: "Focus all regulatory, management, protection and scientific efforts on priority patches as established by a site characterization group."

Actions Taken: The site prioritization process, which was initiated at the PHVA workshop and drafted by the PHVA site prioritization working group, will be finalized and used in the proposed regulatory framework to ensure that we are focusing our efforts on top quality sites, rather than those sites that happened to come in first through the regulatory process. We understand that not all 30+ acre (Tier 3) sites have the same benefit in protection. As we have learned more about Butler's gartersnake biology and based on the recommendation at the PHVA, we will be focusing our conservation efforts on sites that have meta-population potential, unique genetics, high quality habitat, and/or compatible use (sites with public ownership that have a conservation purpose).

What's Different About the Proposed Regulatory Framework?

The proposed Butler's gartersnake regulatory framework will focus on Butler's gartersnake records. The new framework also clearly articulates avoidance options. Research, management, and voluntary conservation and protection options will be contained in the pro-active plan. For more details, please refer to the proposed Butler's gartersnake regulatory framework.

Existing Regulatory Framework	Tier 1 Sites	Tier 2 Sites	Tier 3 Sites
	<p>Definition: A suitable habitat patch of minimal conservation value where the BGS* occurs and includes suitable habitat that is < 10 acres in size, regardless of habitat quality, or < 20 acres with poor habitat quality.</p> <p>Action: Broad Incidental Take Authorization for Tier 1 BGS sites</p>	<p>Definition: A suitable habitat patch of moderate conservation value where the BGS occurs and includes suitable habitat that is > 10 acres and < 20 acres with moderate to good habitat quality, or is > 20 acres and < 30 acres with poor to moderate habitat quality.</p> <p>Action: Broad Incidental Take Authorization for Tier 2 BGS sites</p>	<p>Definition: A suitable habitat patch of significant conservation value where the BGS occurs and includes suitable habitat that is > 20 acres and < 30 acres with good habitat quality or is > 30 acres regardless of habitat quality.</p> <p>Action: All projects proceeded under existing Butler's Gartersnake Conservation Strategy.</p>
Proposed Regulatory Framework	0-30 Acres of Suitable Habitat		> 30 Acres of Suitable Habitat
	↓ Proposed Broad Incidental Take Authorization with regulatory options ↓		
	<p>If Butler's gartersnake records are present, projects are strongly encouraged to employ avoidance measures (see steps 5-9).</p>		<p>If no BGS record: Voluntary Conservation Measures</p> <p>If BGS record: Proceed to Flowchart</p> <p>Avoidance: steps 1-9</p> <p>Verification: steps 10-12</p> <p>Conservation Plan: step 12</p>

* Butler's Gartersnake

Additional Butler's Gartersnake Tools Will be Available

A habitat assessment training was held in March 2007 to train approximately 30 environmental consultants and other professionals in southeastern Wisconsin to conduct Butler's gartersnake habitat assessments. With the release of the new regulatory framework, we will also be conducting training sessions covering the identification of gartersnakes in Wisconsin, Butler's gartersnake surveys, and Butler's gartersnake conservation plans. We are also completing a comprehensive Butler's gartersnake species guidance document that will be released with the new Conservation Strategy. This document was requested by stakeholders and will contain general species information, inventory and research needs, habitat management guidance, and avoidance guidance.

For More Information Contact:

Rori Paloski * Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources * Bureau of Endangered Resources
P.O. Box 7921 * Madison, WI 53707-7921 * 608-264-6040 * rori.paloski@wisconsin.gov